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SILENT BONES SPEAK VOLUMES--OFTEN TELL THEIR STORY IN COURT

When a man "finishes off" an illegally taken duck, and leans back in his chair with the complacency of one who feels that he has committed the perfect crime just because he has eaten the evidence, he is often due for a rude awakening, John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said today.

For, Mr. Farley explained, like the skeleton in the closet, the skeleton on the dinner plate can come back and haunt, because those silent bones speak volumes to the man who knows how to listen to them.

Not only do the bones say in substance that they are all that is left of what once was a pintail--or widgeon, or green-winged teal, or shoveler--but they also say whether they were once part of a drake or hen.

Sometimes they are forced to admit they are not what they were supposed to be, as was the case in Colorado when some nimrods who presumably had a "poached" grouse in the pot actually were devouring turkey buzzard, a study of the bones proved.

Fish and Wildlife Service biologists for many years have maintained facilities in the National Museum of Washington, D. C., to permit the accurate identification of bones or plumage of wild birds. These facilities have been invaluable in the apprehension of persons guilty of killing protected species of birds.

Not long ago a restaurant man in Texas was serving wild duck to selected customers. A few bones concealed in a napkin of one of the customers plus some laboratory work resulted in evidence which brought a conviction.

In another case a man had cut a fowl into three-inch pieces ready for the pot. He told investigators that it was a domestic goose and denied any knowledge of the whistling swan feathers which were found on his premises. A laboratory test of the bones of a piece or two taken from the pot proved that the bird was a whistling swan which is one of the protected species. Conviction followed.

In the grouse-turkey buzzard incident in Colorado there was no legal action for the buzzard is not a federally protected bird--and besides, eating the turkey buzzard was considered punishment enough.

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